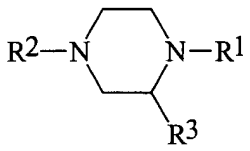
IN THE CLAIMS

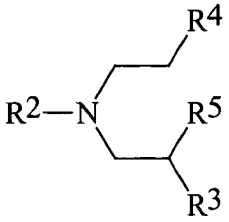
1. (Currently amended) A method for preparing a compound of the formula



IV

wherein R^1 denotes phenylalkoxy, tosyl, benzoyl, or formyl; R^2 denotes alkyl, alkoxy, phenyl, phenyloxy or phenylalkoxy; and R^3 denotes ~~alkyl, alkoxy,~~ phenyl, ~~phenyloxy or phenylalkoxy,~~

comprising the step of reacting a compound of the formula



V

wherein R^2 and R^3 are as defined above and R^4 and R^5 are independently selected from the group consisting of fluoro, chloro, bromo and iodo,

with a compound of the formula $H_2N\text{-}R^1$, wherein R^1 is as defined above.

2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein R^1 is selected from the group consisting of formyl, benzoyl, and tosyl.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein R^1 is tosyl.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein R^2 is methyl.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein R^4 is chloro.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein R^5 is chloro.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the reaction is performed in a solvent selected from the group consisting of DMF, DMAC, ethers, ethyleneglycol dimethyl ether, diethyleneglycol dimethyl ether, propyleneglycol dimethyl ether, DMSO, xylene, benzene, ethylbenzene, acetonitrile and toluene.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein said solvent is DMF.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of adding a strong base.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said strong base is selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, sodium hydride, potassium hydroxide, potassium hydride, sodium methoxide and sodium amide.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the base is sodium hydroxide.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the base is sodium hydride.

14. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of removing R^1 by hydrolysis.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein R^1 is removed by hydrolysis using a strong acid.

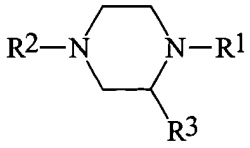
16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the acid is selected from the group consisting of sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, phosphoric acid and p-toluene sulfonic acid.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the acid is sulfuric acid.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the sulfuric acid has a concentration of about 98%.

19-48. (Canceled)

49. (Currently amended) A compound of the formula:



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wherein R^1 denotes tosyl, formyl, or benzoyl; R^2 denotes ~~alkyl, alkoxy, phenyl, phenyloxy or phenylalkoxy~~ methyl; and R^3 denotes ~~alkoxy,~~ phenyl~~, phenyloxy or phenylalkoxy~~.

50. (Canceled)

51. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein R^2 is alkyl.

52. (Canceled)

53. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein R^1 denotes tosyl; R^2 is alkyl, phenyl, phenyloxy or phenylalkoxy; and R^3 is phenyl ~~or alkyl~~.

54. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein R^1 denotes tosyl, formyl, or benzoyl; R^2 is alkyl; and R^3 is phenyl.

55. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein R^1 denotes tosyl; R^2 is alkyl; and R^3 is phenyl.

56. (Canceled)

57. (Canceled)

58. (Canceled)

59. (Canceled)

60. (Canceled)

61. (Canceled)

62. (Canceled)

63. (Currently amended) The compound of claim ~~58~~ 49, wherein R^1 denotes tosyl~~; R^2 is alkyl; and R^3 is phenyl~~.

64-67. (Canceled)

68. (Currently amended) A method for preparing 4-methyl-2-phenylpiperazine comprising hydrolyzing the compound of claim 49 using an acid.

69. (Previously presented) The method of claim 68, wherein the acid is sulfuric acid.

70. (Previously presented) A method for preparing 3-cyano-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazynyl) pyridine comprising:

hydrolyzing the compound of claim 49 to form 4-methyl-2-phenylpiperazine; and

reacting 4-methyl-2-phenylpiperazine with a 3-cyano-pyridine to form 3-cyano-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazynyl) pyridine.

71. (Currently amended) A method for preparing mirtazapine comprising the steps of:

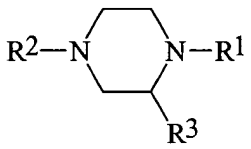
hydrolyzing the compound of claim 49 to form 4-methyl-2-phenylpiperazine;

reacting 4-methyl-2-phenylpiperazine with a 3-cyano-pyridine to form ~~3-cyano-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazynyl)~~ 3-cyano-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazinyl) pyridine;

converting ~~3-cyano-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazynyl)~~ 3-cyano-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazinyl) pyridine to ~~3-carboxy-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazynyl)~~ 3-carboxy-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazinyl) pyridine; and

converting ~~3-carboxy-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazynyl)~~ 3-carboxy-2-(4-methyl-2-phenyl-1-piperazinyl) pyridine to mirtazapine.

72. (New) A compound of the formula:



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wherein R^1 denotes phenylalkoxy, tosyl, benzoyl, or formyl; R^2 denotes alkyl, alkoxy, phenyl, phenyloxy or phenylalkoxy; and R^3 denotes phenyl.

73. (New) The compound of claim 72, wherein R^1 is formyl, benzoyl, or tosyl.

74. (New) The compound of claim 72, wherein R^2 is alkyl.

75. (New) The compound of claim 72, wherein R^2 is methyl.

76. (New) The compound of claim 72, wherein R^1 is tosyl and R^2 is alkyl.